

# Best Practices Resident Councils

## MAG Long Term Care Ombudsman

<p><b>What is a Resident Council?</b>  Resident councils are like city councils, PTA meetings, or Homeowner's meetings.  Meetings are usually held monthly  ALL residents can attend  Residents can elect officers  Residents can provide input (good and bad) about the facility.  Family members can create a Family Council; they should not attend Resident Council</p>	<p><b>Resident Council Regulations:</b>  Facilities must support a resident council if requested by residents. This includes providing a meeting space and a staff member to help.  Staff members attend ONLY at the residents' invitation.  Staff MUST respond to issues from the resident council.  Minutes are available to residents and survey teams.</p>
<p><b>Leadership and Officers</b>  Officers can be chosen for 1, 3, 6 or 12 month terms  Nominations and voting can be done with raised hands (eyes open or eyes closed), going room to room, or written ballot (some include pictures)  Elections can include posters, speeches and debates  Officers often include president/chair, vice-president/chair and secretary  Additional roles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Committees--Welcoming, Birthday, etc.</li> <li>● Department Liaisons--lead discussion for a specific department and follow up with staff, ie Housekeeping, Dietary, Social Services</li> <li>● Hall Representatives for large facilities; have a separate meeting</li> </ul> <p>If no resident wants to be an officer, staff can run the meeting; this should be reassessed quarterly</p>	<p><b>Staff Attendance at Meetings</b>  1 staff member attends with permission of residents  Staff member can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take Minutes</li> <li>● Support the resident to run the meeting</li> <li>● Provide feedback to/from administration</li> <li>● Maintain confidentiality of residents</li> <li>● Ensure residents with specific concerns can complete a grievance or meet with staff after the meeting</li> </ul> <p>Some resident councils have the administrator and/or department heads attend all meetings to help with immediate feedback  Some facilities have separate meetings during the month with each department (ie Food committee, Activity planning)</p>
<p><b>Agenda Ideas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Large type, printed agendas are in clear holders on a table for officers to use while conducting</li> <li>● Printed agendas are provided to all residents</li> <li>● Welcome may include Pledge of Allegiance, prayer, minute of silence for those who passed away</li> <li>● Monthly Resident Right; if the Ombudsman attends, they can read or provide an example</li> <li>● Include time to discuss each department</li> <li>● Select: Resident Choice Employee of the Month, Resident of the Month, Resident Choice Meal of the Month</li> <li>● End with listing positive things about the facility</li> </ul>	<p><b>Administration Feedback Ideas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Administration MUST RESPOND to resident council concerns and ideas; administration is NOT required to respond in a specific way</li> <li>● Resident Council officer(s), administrator, and recreation staff review meeting notes in a separate meeting</li> <li>● Administrator/department heads write a response to concerns; these are read at next meeting and included in minutes</li> <li>● Administrator types a newsletter addressing concerns and delivers to all residents</li> <li>● Administrator has a meeting 1-2 weeks after resident council to address concerns; all residents are invited</li> </ul>

**Common Problems and Solutions**  
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**Residents share personal or medical concerns:**

- Calmly remind resident that this is a place for general concerns
- Write specific concerns on a separate grievance form for specific department
- Ask if other residents are having this general concern and add information in minutes without specific names
- Do not include medical information or personal information in notes, since these are public

**Residents argue or disagree during meeting:**

- Differences of opinion and disagreements are common in public meetings
- Remind residents that discussions need to be polite and respectful (at the beginning of the meeting and when disagreements arise)
- Say, "Everyone's views are important. Let's hear from Bob for one minute and then Sam." Then summarize what each person or side said
- Suggest residents brainstorm ideas
- Table an issue until another time

**Same Issues come up over and over:**

- Issues of staffing, call light wait times, and food concerns come up frequently in resident council meetings. These are important issues because they affect a resident's life every day.
- State surveyors look at resident council minutes and responses so there should be a clear pattern of what/how the facility is working to resolve the issue
- Residents become discouraged and stop attending resident council meetings because "nothing ever changes"
- Try to get specifics, such as "in the past week, has this happened daily?" or "Is this happening on the night shift? Day shift?" Then compare to past meetings such as "Last month this was happening daily on the night shift. How is it going now?"

**One resident monopolizes the meeting:**

- This is common in all public meetings
- Remind everyone that comments need to be brief, for instance, 1 minute
- Use a talking stick or timer for everyone
- If a resident has a specific need, offer to speak with them separately, after the meeting